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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 002539

SIPDIS

NEA/ARN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/29/2013

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ELAB](#) [JO](#) [ILAB](#)

SUBJECT: LABOR SUPPORTING PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATE; UNION
LEADER OPTIMISTIC ON POST-SADDAM WORLD AND COOPERATION WITH
THE PALACE.

REF: AMMAN 3761 (2002)

Classified By: CDA GREGORY L. BERRY. REASONS: 15. (B) and (D)

1. (C) SUMMARY. Fathallah Omrani, Vice President of the Jordanian International Textile Workers Union, told us April 29 he is optimistic a parliamentary candidate in Irbid endorsed by the textile union would be elected. He was also pleased to report increased contact with the Palace on QIZ/labor issues. Finally, Omrani noted that QIZ investors are "much more relaxed" following the fall of Saddam's regime, and reported hints that QIZ investment here may benefit from the SARS epidemic in Asia. End summary.

GETTING ORGANIZED: LABOR
BACKS PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATE

2. (C) On April 29, PolOff met with Fathallah Omrani. Omrani was upbeat, and was happy to report that union-backed Gibreel Abu Rahman, director of a large QIZ textile plant near Irbid, was off to a strong start with his parliamentary election campaign. Last week, Omrani organized a meeting of 120 QIZ workers, where he stressed the need for the workers and their families to vote, and to vote for Abu Rahman. Omrani told the workers that having a parliamentarian who was elected "by the laborers" is crucial. He estimates that there are over 2,500 votes in the Irbid QIZ factories.

3. (C) Omrani said he understands that many are going to vote for their own tribe's candidate, but expects the majority of laborers in the district to go with Abu Rahman. Omrani told PolOff that many QIZ workers, male and female, have volunteered to work for Abu Rahman's campaign. "Abu Rahman is very, very popular. He is the labor candidate. People know that the union, and the new QIZ jobs, have allowed people to take care of themselves and their families." He noted that thousands of people have access to basic health care through the union's cooperative health clinic that Omrani organized with QIZ plant managers and factory owners (reftel).

ROYAL PALACE IS 'LISTENING'
TO LABOR CONCERNS

4. (C) Omrani reported that he has direct contact with the Royal Palace on labor issues. In early April, Omrani was invited to a roundtable meeting with King Abdullah to discuss labor issues. Since then, he has had an on-going dialogue with Dr. Khalid Wazani, Director of the Economic Department for the Royal Palace. Omrani said this is a refreshing change after being "ignored" for years by the Prime Ministry and other GOJ ministries. He noted that Wazani specifically told Omrani to "talk with him first" -- as opposed to the ministries -- on issues of concern. Omrani was very happy to report delivery of computers donated by the GOJ, which were delivered recently by Wazani. According to Omrani, Wazani will visit the QIZ factories next week, but has requested that it be "low-key" with no media or photo opportunities.

5. (C) Omrani was confident that investors will continue to invest in the QIZs here. With the war over, investors are "much more relaxed," he said. He also said that some investors reportedly are looking away from investing in traditional textile powerhouses in southeast Asia because of SARS, and he expects a mild windfall for Jordanian QIZs.

COMMENT

6. (C) Omrani is a well organized, politically astute labor leader. Thus, we expect Abu Rahman to be have effective backing in his parliamentary campaign in Southern Irbid. Given the dearth of organized political entities beyond the IAF, a victory by organized labor would be noteworthy.

7. (C) From the labor side, the QIZs appear to be in very good shape post-Saddam. Omrani, who has been outspoken and disenchanted with the GOJ at various times over the past few

years, seems to be genuinely mollified by the Palace attention to him and his cause, and encouraging union members to participate in the forthcoming parliamentary elections.

BIO NOTE

18. (SBU) Gibreel Abu Rahman. Abu Rahman is a Palestinian-Jordanian in his mid-thirties. In 1996, he began working at the Al-Aser sewing factory in quality control and has risen to become the director of the 2,400 worker textile plant. We have nominated him for this year's international visitor's program.
GNEHM